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Error Analysis of Learning of Bahasa Melayu as a Foreign Language by a Japanese Student - a Case Study

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ERROR ANALYSIS OF LEARNING OF BAHASA MELAYU AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE BY A JAPANESE STUDENT - A CASE STUDY -

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Abstract

The Southeast Asian region is indeed a linguistically diverse one. Each of the countries in this region has an indigenous *lingua franca*, which is used by people of various backgrounds including foreigners in socializing with each other. In Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore and Brunei Darussalam, the *lingua franca* is Malay or Bahasa Melayu, while in the Philippines it is Tagalog. Bahasa Melayu in Malaysia, it is a well formed tool for the foreigners to learn not only to communicate, but also to describe and explain their surroundings, cultural practices, feelings and thoughts. This paper based on Error Analysis Theory, will discuss how a Japanese learner acquired Bahasa Melayu at the Faculty of Languages and Linguistics. The analysis will look at how an intermediate level learner picked her words to express her feelings in a short essay.

Perpustakaan Universiti Malaya



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1. Introduction

This paper summarizes some of the findings in the error analysis on how a Japanese learner acquired Bahasa Melayu at the Faculty of Languages and Linguistics. The subject in this study is Oshima, a housewife living in Kuala Lumpur. She signed up as a full time student of the Bahasa Melayu proficiency program offered at the faculty. She was assigned to write an essay entitled *Hobi Saya* (My Hobby) and was interviewed on her experience in the learning of Bahasa Melayu as a foreign language. It should be noted that, prior to the first interview, in fact from six months after her exposure to Bahasa Melayu began, I made repeated attempts to interview her in a natural environment, but she produced very little speech in Bahasa Melayu.

2. Methodology and purpose of study

Error Analysis is a method involves the classification and interpretation of errors of a learner and also enables us to predict errors in language learning. It is an invaluable source of information to teachers which provides information on student's errors. Through the analysis, it will help teacher to correct student's errors and also improves the effectiveness of her teaching.

The definition of error analysis "*what has come to be known as error analysis has to do with the investigation of the language of second language learner*" by Corder (1974) is very relevant to this entire discussion. Corder (1981) also had the similar view regarding the function of error analysis and that there are two justifications for studying learner's errors, they are its relevance to language teaching and the study of the language acquisition process. He mentioned that,

"...the pedagogical justification, namely that a good understanding of the nature of error is necessary before a systematic means of eradicating them could be found, and the theoretical justification, which claims that a study of learners' errors is part of the systematic study of the learners' language which is

itself necessary to an understanding of the process of second language acquisition."

As this discussion will look at learner's errors, it is appropriate to define what is meant by errors because *mistakes* and *errors* are often used interchangeably by researchers. There is a very clear difference between *mistakes* and *errors*. Norrish (1983) gave a clear explanation between mistake and error. He defined errors as,

"...errors as a systematic deviation when a learner has not learnt something and consistently gets it wrong that is when a learner of English as a second or foreign language makes an error systematically, it is because he has not learnt the correct form."

and mistakes as,

"when a learner has been taught a certain correct form, and he uses one form sometimes and another at other times quite inconsistently, the inconsistent deviation is called a mistake."

In this discussion, I hope to highlight the findings of an error analysis study that was conducted on how a Japanese learner acquired Bahasa Melayu at the Faculty of Languages and Linguistics. The aims of the study were,

- a. to indicate some of the grammar items that have been mastered;
- b. to investigate if there is any significant difference in the errors in relation to the grammar learnt.

The main purpose of this study is to categorise and evaluate the types of words picked and used in her written composition. In other words, this study sets out to investigate the factors that contribute to the student's errors.

3. Za'ba and Foreign Language Learning

Zainal Abidin Bin Ahmad or in short Za'ba, a well known Bahasa Melayu expert had stressed in his writing *Ilmu Mengarang Melayu* (1934, 1962 dan 2002) the importance to differentiate the knowledge of grammar and language use. He

emphasized that a person who is good in her language does not mean she is good in explaining the grammar. He further explained that when a person is learning a language, she needs not learn its grammar first. He said that language use as in an essay writing, is an important component that required a lot of drills.

"maka belajar hendak pandai mengarang pun demikianlah juga, Tidak mesti seseorang itu mengenal lebih dahulu yang mana kata nama, yang mana kata perbuatan, yang mana ganti nama, yang mana kata sifat nama...ia hendaklah mengarang terus dan membuatnya selalu-selalu. Ia akan membuat silap dan salah, tetapi hendaklah ia belajar daripada silap dan salahnya itu sendiri."

(Bab Permulaan, Ceraian 12)

He believed that in the first language acquisition, the grammar plays an important role to enhance one's language proficiency. However, in the second or foreign language learning, the role of the grammar is needed to ensure the student will not be interfered by her mother tongue. Za'ba, therefore, put the importance of word use in a language learning because it will show the level of language proficiency of a learner. Asmah (2001) shared the same view by saying,

"untuk mengetahui butir-butir yang dituturkan oleh seseorang itu, kita perlu mengetahui kata yang digunakannya. Walaupun kita tidak mengetahui jalannya sesuatu bahasa, jika kita dapat mengeluarkan butir-butir perkataan daripada sesuatu tutur, maka kita sekurang-kurangnya kita dapat meneka apa yang dirujuk oleh seseorang itu."

(Kaedah Penyelidikan Bahasa dan Lapangan, 2001: 64)

Therefore, it is important for a learner of Bahasa Melayu as a foreign language to master the words use before learning its grammar.

4. Findings

The sample managed to produce an essay on a given topic and has used appropriate words to express her interest clearly. One significant production in her writing is the sample has shown how to pick suitable words in addressing her world of interest. She, clearly, know-how to differentiate the word *hobi*, a translated word from English hobby with the word *kegemaran*. Her choice of words between *hobi* and *kegemaran* has proven to us that the sample attempted to preserve the original Bahasa Melayu words rather than using the borrowed words.

The sample also shown us her ability to understand the differences between the words *sedar* and *rasa*. *Sedar* is an action verb with full conscious whereas *rasa* is an action verb with semi-conscious feelings. In her short essay, she used the words differently in separate context.

Nevertheless, the sample has made a few errors in her choice of words in the essay writing. The pronoun *ku*, for instance, is an obvious errors which is wrongly used by the sample as in *hobiku*. Asraf said that “*kata ganti diri singkat ku yang boleh dianggap sebagai imbuhan dan boleh diletakkan di awal kata seolah-oleh sebagai awalan seperti dalam rumahku, kekasihku*” (2007:14). It is therefore, the usage of *hobiku* is rather inappropriate compare to the *hobi saya*. The teacher needs to give proper guidelines on how to use the pronoun *ku* with its proper context.

Another minor error that the sample shown in her writing is she used colloquial Bahasa Melayu *mengisi lapang* to express how she fills her free time. This example proved to us that the sample has a problem to differentiate the usage of spoken and writing Bahasa Melayu. Teachers then should be more aware of those words and provide necessary advice on this matter.

5. Conclusions

The study of student's errors could provide Bahasa Melayu teachers an insight on the errors that require remedial work. Such information would be the starting point for the teacher to focus his attention on those areas that actually need further reinforcement. As such, time and energy will not be wasted on teaching areas which posed major problems to students.

For instance, it is clearly stated that the errors in the use of certain words require more attention than the others. Teachers then should be more aware of those words and provide necessary follow up work to check the problem areas as discussed earlier.

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APPENDIX 1



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HOBİ SAYA

Kegemaran saya ialah membuat gubahan bunga ikebana dan Japanese tea ceremony, menyulam dan mengembara. Kini saya tidak berapa dapat mengembara ke sana-sini kerana mungkin badan saya tidak sebegitu kuat lagi.

Untuk maksud sulaman, saya dapat temui banyak perhiasan yang cantik dan gambar-gambar yang menyulam kelihatan seperti asal di rumah kawan asal, contohnya, perhiasan pada dinding, langsir, alas meja, kusyen dan sebagainya. Dari besoknya saya suruh dia mengajar menyulam. Tiap-tiap malam, saya menyulam sekurang-kurangnya satu jam kerana saya juga ingin mempelajarinya serupa kawan saya itu.

Untuk maksud mengenai gubahan ikebana dan Japanese tea ceremony, saya ingin belajar kedua-duanya. Sebabnya, pada masa saya berada di Malaysia sepuluh tahun lalu, kadang-kadang saya dapati susah hendak menerangkan kebudayaan Jepun kepada orang Malaysia. Oleh

sebab itu, saya bersambung belajar gubahan bunga itu dan baharu belajar tea ceremony itu dalam tahun 2000.

Sekarang, saya mendapat banyak kaedah daripada pengetahuan kebudayaan negara saya.

Saya sedar senang saya menghilangkan masalah-masalah atau kesusahan-kesusahan yang saya menghadapi dengan menupukan perhatian kepada gubahan bunga itu dan tea ceremony itu.

Gubahan bunga dan Japanese tea ceremony mempunyai peraturan-peraturan yang tertentu. Perkara ini menyebabkan saya membuat kerja dengan bersistem.

Jika umur saya panjang, saya ingin terus mengisi lapang dengan menyulam, membuat gubahan bungan ikebana dan Japanese tea ceremony.

APPENDIX 2

BIODATA OF SAMPLE

A. Sample

1. Name : Ryo Oshima
2. Age :
3. Designation : Housewife

B. Language Background

1. Native/First Language : Japanese
2. Foreign/Second Language : Malay

C. Background of Malay Language Education

1. College attended : Faculty of Languages and Linguistics
2. Course attended : Malay Language Proficiency
3. Period : 2 years
4. Purpose : To translate Malay books into Japanese
5. Texts used : Nik Safiah Karim et al
Bahasa Malaysia Progresif Dewan
Kuala Lumpur: Dewan bahasa dan
Pustaka, 1988.
6. Dictionary used : Awang Sudjar and Yusof Khan
Kamus Lengkap
Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Zaman, 1977.
7. Newspaper read : Utusan Malaysia
8. Problem faced : (a) Malay suffixes;
(b) sentence structures; and
(c) pronunciation.